

Here We Go, Together: 2014-15

Description



My son in the final game at Santa Barbara Summer Cup Tournament. FCLA team 2014 champs!

My kids started their second year at [Viewpoint School](#) last week, my son in 5th grade and my daughter in 8th grade (I know!). It seems like everything is already in full swing with football practice, back-to-school night, homework, tryouts, auditions and volunteering mode. As the kids get older, juggling their schedules becomes more challenging, but it's exciting to watch them tackle new classes and activities with excitement and enthusiasm

For those of you who are new here, I haven't forgotten about [my own first application process for kindergarten](#). It is the reason I keep writing this blog and speaking at preschools. I strongly believe every parent who wants a private school education in L.A. should have as much information available to him or her as possible. The notion that every year parents all across this city have to reinvent the wheel every September by spending hours researching information about schools, but coming up almost empty handed, bothers me. The information is there, it just isn't as easily accessible as it should be. Most schools give very limited information on their websites. A few offer a solid admissions roadmap. Overall, websites have improved since we applied for kindergarten in 2006. Other parents can be a wealth of knowledge, but are often not willing to share with people they don't know well

(this has definitely been my experience). Some [preschool directors](#) are a great information source (ours definitely was). Educational consultants can help those families who need assistance navigating the entire process or a few hours with an expert.



One of my favorite pics of the kids, 2012. Photo: Joy Smallwood

What this all adds up to is the “insider” information is there for those who are “insiders” when it should be available to anyone who wants it. Why should a mom who has a friend at a private school have better, more accurate information about applying than a family without connections? This is a rhetorical question, but it's also one that I faced when we first applied. Generally, I found most parents to be tight-lipped about the admissions process, but occasionally I’d encounter a generous person who’d share really good advice. We also had a preschool director who was both well-connected and experienced with all things admissions. And, we had Anne Simon, my co-author and step-mom who helped us tremendously.



A fun weekend trip this summer to San Francisco with our extended family

Now that I've been a mom at two different private schools, I know how much "insider" information and contacts help applicant families. Being able to say you know a current family can help your application. I've written recommendation letters for friends and lobbied for their kids to be accepted. Trust me when I say it can move the application from the bottom of the pile to the top.

So, for those who are new to the blog, just starting the admissions process, welcome. I hope you find this blog a good source of information as you proceed through tours, interviews and visiting days. The pressure can be intense and exhausting. Most of the process is highly subjective, with a few objective aspects like application deadlines or tour dates. I also hope you find the funny in it (as we try to do) every once in a while. After all, private schools can be shrouded in secrecy, much like country clubs (actually, the two go hand in hand at a few elite schools where parents refer their friends from the country club to the school and conversely, parents join specific country clubs with the hope of getting help from members who are parents at a particular school). These are the kind of things that will always surprise me, no matter how many years we're at private school. The private airplane hanger and soccer field in the back yard also cause my eyes to widen. The idea of [community at private schools](#) is one I've struggled with. If I were starting over, I'd have focused more on whether the school was a fit for our entire family, not just the kids. I'd pay closer attention to the subtle things that make a school what it is (or is not). I've made a few good friends during these years, but my biggest challenge has been finding a true sense of community. Thankfully, I see that beginning to happen at Viewpoint.



Barry's birthday dinner at Madeo

Beyond The Brochure was started in 2010, after the First Edition of our book (the Second Edition was released in Oct. 2013). Most of the writing on this blog is mine, with help my co-authors and from [amazing guest bloggers](#). I post about 1-2 times per week and I spend about 30 hours/week on the blog, marketing the book and related events and activities. Anne and I respond to every reader email (csimon2007 at gmail dot com) and I love meeting you at events, putting faces to names and being able to share information. I also use the blog's [Facebook page](#) as a place to share our blog posts and interesting stuff I find online related to events, education, parenting, books, etc. Yesterday, I posted a blurb about Elon Musk (Tesla, Paypal founder) who has started a new invite-only private school, after he left Mirman School. If you want to know more about me personally, you can find it in the ["About The Authors"](#) or the ["Find Us Here Too"](#) sections across the blog header.

[Barry](#) and I didn't apply to schools as "insiders" but rather as parents who wanted our kids to go to private school. Now that its been more than 7 years as private school parents, I guess you could say that we are firmly on the inside, although writing this blog and my [husband's rather sarcastic sense of humor](#) will probably always keep us from being deep insiders who serve on the board or that sort of thing. And that suits us perfectly.

Cheers to a fantastic 2014-15! "Christina

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